

# THE ROCK

By Morgan Robertson

Drawing by George Varian

**I** TELL ye I saw it—wi' these eyes I saw it!"

"You think you seen it."  
"Now I quit. Ye talk like every mate or skipper or Consul I've told this to. Just the same, I never git to the end o' the third day out, either way,—I'm in a six-day boat, ye know,—but what the nervousness gits me, an' I'm no good for twelve hours, until I know we're past the spot."

"A rock, you say, in the middle o' the Atlantic? Why isn't it known and charted?"

"Because it's awash an' visible only at the fall o' the spring tides."

"How is it that no one else saw it but you?"

"I was the only man aloft. She was a hemp rigged old ballyhoo out o' Quebec, an' gear was chafin' through all the time. I was passin' a new seizin' on the collar o' the fore-topmast stay, when I squinted ahead through the fog, and there it was, black an' shiny an' murderous, about forty feet long, I should judge, and five feet or so out o' water, right dead under the bow. I could see the lift o' the water where the current pushed ag'in' it, and the swirl on t'other side, showin' it was no derelict, bottom up. No, it was a rock. 'Starboard!' I yells to the felly at the wheel. 'Starboard! Hard up!' Well, the skipper was below, an' the second mate, who had the deck, was mixin' paint under the fo'c'sle; so the wheel went up an' the old wagon paid off fore the wind. Then I lost it myself in the fog, an', as I couldn't point out anything to the skipper when he come up, I was called down an' cursed for a fool. But I saw it, just the same, a big rock halfway across, and squarely between the lane routes!"

"How do you know that?"

"The skipper wasn't above givin' me the ship's position,—forty-seven north; thirty-seven twenty west. That's between the lanes, an' I'll bet the Naronic is at the base o' that rock, to say nothin' o' the Pacific, the President, and t'others."

**T**HE wabby little West-st. horse car had reached the White Star dock by this, and the two men stepped off. Steamship sailors, I knew. I had never seen them before, and have never seen them since; but their conversation produced a marked impression upon me, and I could not shake off a feeling—not of itself a remembrance, however—that I had heard something of the kind before. A submerged rock in mid-Atlantic! But it was incredible, and at last I put it from my mind as a galley yarn.

But next morning it was back, in company with another galley yarn, one I barely remembered as having heard ten years before from an old Confederate man-o-war'sman who had sailed with Semmes in the Alabama. The yarn pertained to the pursuit of a northern merchant ship, and I give only the conclusion.

"We were gaining fast," he had said, "and hoped to bring her to before breakfast; for at daylight she was but three miles or so ahead, every sail drawing and every detail of spar, canvas, and hull showing clear in the morning light. And then, while we looked at her, she quickly settled under, not head first or stern first, as is usual, but on an even keel. They had no time to start a brace or a halyard; there was not time for her to answer to her wheel, if it had been shifted. She just went down as though something had hooked onto her keel and dragged her under. I never learned her name; but she must have been bound out of New York, or Boston, for some French port in the Channel. We picked up one of her men; but he couldn't tell her name, and only this much as to what happened. A ripping, crashing sound began forward and worked its way aft, ending at the stern, and we could only surmise that something—a submerged derelict, perhaps—had scraped the bottom out of her."

**M**EMORY is treacherous. In a few days I had forgotten this yarn with the other, and might never have recalled it had I not ascended to an upper floor in the lofty Flatiron Building and looked out of a window at the loftier, but unfinished, tower of the Metropolitan Building across the park. It was a damp, dismal day of fog; but at my elevation I could see clear of it. I was above it, looking over an undulating sea of cloud bank from which the tower rose, massive and mighty, apparently floating on end, like an immense spar buoy at the turn of the tide. The rest of New York lay hidden beneath that silent gray ocean of fog.

Interesting as it was of itself, it was not the spectacle before me that gripped and held me, but an associated idea. As it was the first time I had ever seen a skyscraper lift itself above the clouds, so it naturally reminded me of the first time I had seen a mountaintop above the clouds. This was Krakatoa Island, a conical mountain rising from the sea in the

"Stay There an' Think  
It Over. Ye Man—  
Killin' Shlave Driver!"

Straits of Sunda, but since submerged in the Java earthquake.

With this mental picture before me, my thoughts touched upon other happenings of that boyhood voyage,—the long, tedious beat through the straits against light head winds and a continuous head tide; the man killing log windlass, round which we hove and lightened chain of an eight-inch link; the natives, with their welcome fruit in exchange for trinkets; and, lastly, the white haired old pilot, who came forward to visit me one evening on anchor watch.

And then, like an inspired flash, there surged into my mind not only the two galley yarns, but the story told by the pilot,—a story of such burning power and horror that, though forgotten for a generation, it spelled itself out, word for word, as I stared into the fog from the window, exactly as the old man had told it.

He had heard from the skipper that I was from the same part of New York State as himself, and he had come forward for news of home. I could give him little. I knew no one that he knew; the small town that gave him birth was not far from my own, but was only a name to me. Still he remained to talk. My up-State accent pleased him, he said, and reminded him of home, which he had not seen for forty years and hardly hoped to see. He was sixty-five years old; two shocks had come, and the third would finish him.

**B**UT I'm an old, experienced man, my boy," he said, "and I can give you my life's wisdom in three short rules, easy to remember and easy to follow. Stick to your skipper; leave liquor alone; and never, under any provocation, engage in mutiny. I broke everyone of these, and here I've been for half a lifetime an exile, afraid to go home."

Not realizing how sorely I needed this wisdom, but keenly interested in mutiny, piracy, and such fancies of boyhood, I asked for light, and he gave it to me.

"I won't tell you the name of the ship," he said; "for you'll be a boy for sometime to come, and you might talk about it. Nor will I give you the real names of the men engaged in that mutiny; for it is only forty years back, and there may be men alive yet who will be interested in the fate of the ship; though none, I expect, who would care much about

her crew. But I'll tell you that her crew was the toughest gang I ever saw in a fore-castle, and her skipper and mate the most inhuman brutes I ever saw aft. I was second mate, and, having won my berth in deep water, thought I was something of a bucko; but I found my masters there. The ship, I may as well say, was one of the packets that traded between New York and Liverpool, sometimes carrying passengers, but not always. We had none this trip.

"Before we were two days out from Sandy Hook I got a taste of the skipper's caliber. A man aloft, a big red headed fellow, gave me an insolent answer from the crowjack yard, and I called him down. When he reached the deck I was ready, and sent him reeling over the break of the poop with one smash on the jaw. He was satisfied to go aloft again and answer civilly when spoken to; but the skipper, who had watched the performance, was not. He called me over to the lee alley and faced me, his face fairly alive with rage and contempt.

"Say, you—you—you Sunday school teacher! Is that the way you expect to handle men in these packets? Hey?"

"I didn't hit him hard, sir," I answered. "I didn't hurt him. He's aloft now, at work."

"You didn't hurt him? No, I'll warrant you didn't! Why didn't you follow him up, watch for his knife, and take it away from him? 'Fraid of him? Hey? How do you expect to get along wi' this kind of a crew if you're content with one smash. Follow it up, man! Follow up your first blow with another, and another, till you're sure of him."

"Oh, I understand, Captain," I said. "Well, sir, I'm not worrying over any further trouble with that fellow. He's had enough."

"Make sure of it. You'll get no sympathy from me if he wins out."

**I**T seems that the way of deep water was not the way of the packets. Somewhat impressed by this, I waited until eight bells, when the redhead came down,—his job was merely the passing of new robands in place of old,—and tackled him amidships as he went forward.

"Well," I said, "what do you think? The skipper says I didn't give you enough. Have you had enough, or do you want more?"

"He looked me squarely in the eyes, and his hand



wandered toward his sheath knife in his belt. Mine wandered toward a pistol in my hip pocket.

"I'm fore the mast, sir," he said; "and as a man fore the mast—yes, of course I've had enough. But I've been aft, and I may be aft again. Then, too, you may be fore the mast. Well, sir, I know the law."

"Forecastle lawyer, are you?" I asked derisively.

"Yes, and more!" he exploded. "Your superior in seamanship, you blanked whitewashed son of a ship owner!"

"My fist shot out; but he dodged it and ran forward. I sent a belaying pin after him, and it hit him on the shoulder; but I doubt that it hurt him."

IN the next twenty-four hours four men came aft to the skipper for medical treatment from the medicine chest. Redhead had disabled them, in one way or another. One had a broken rib, the result of a punch; the skipper set it. Another had lost some teeth and showed a few more that were loose. The skipper called upon the carpenter and his pliers to remove these, and sent the man forward. Another was carried aft, unconscious from a fist blow under the ear; and the skipper could only lay him out on a cabin transom to wait until he came to. The last was a case of asthma. Redhead had planted his fist plumb upon his throat, and the resultant inflammation threatened to strangle the man. But the skipper gave him a porous plaster for his chest, and a big cathartic pill, by means of which the man came around. You know the Yankee skipper's formula: Break your leg or lose your mother—take a pill.

"Well, the outcome of this was that the skipper held a conference of himself, the first mate, and myself. He stated the situation: A man forward was a menace to the tranquillity and the safety of the ship. Who would take him down?"

"The first mate, with a look of patronizing pity at me, said to the Captain, 'I'll do this, if nobody else can.' Again the look of pity. 'I'll show him who's who, and what, and which.'"

"Well," said the skipper, "do so, or I'll be afraid of my officers."

"I looked on while the mate called that troublesome malcontent down from aloft, where he had reported the seizing of the fore royal yard adrift without saying sir to Mr. Parker. I watched tranquilly, while the big, whiskered first mate, meeting the man as he dropped from the fore rigging to the deck, received a threshing of fists and kicks that laid him out. We carried him aft, while Redhead retired to the fore-castle. And, as we nursed the mate back to self respect, we heard the profane vows of Redhead to clean us up, all of us."

"The skipper was furious. 'Have I got to go forrard and lick that fellow?' he said. 'Haven't I got a mate aft able to do his duty?'"

"Why not put him in irons, Captain?" I asked. "I knocked him off the poop once, and made him run next time. That seems to be enough as far as I'm concerned."

"The skipper glared at me. 'And do you think,' he said sneeringly, 'that he ran because he was afraid of you? He's afraid of the irons and of the law. But that's just why we don't appeal to the irons and the law in these packets. It's a point of honor with us, and—yes, a matter of policy. We couldn't get crews after a time if we ironed and jailed 'em for each offense. No, that man must be properly licked, and if you can't do it, I'll have to do it myself.'"

"I can do it," I answered quietly, and went forward.

MIKE—for that was the name he gave—was in my watch, and should have remained on deck. I found him in the empty starboard fore-castle and called him out. He came, with a bad look in his eyes.

"Put your knife on the watertank alongside my gun," I said, "and come aft where there's a clear space. We'll find out who runs this ship, you or the afterguard."

"That sounds fair," he said; "but how about the afterclap? This is not my proposition."

"You mean darbies? There'll be none. The skipper wants you licked into shape, so you'll be useful. Come on."

"We laid our weapons on the tank as we passed it, and faced each other abreast of the main hatch. The skipper looked on from the poop; the carpenter and cook came out of their shops to witness; and of course the watch, working aloft, stopped work to look down on us. The sea was smooth, the wind mild and fair, and the ship slid along with very little pitching or rolling; so it was a fair fight."

"Mike was a game fighter; but I was just a little heavier, just a little more skilled, and had just a little longer reach, so I soon had him going. I backed him completely round the hatch, and when I had him up to windward again both his eyes were half closed and his nose broken and bleeding. So far I had not been struck, and I decided now to finish him. I put all my strength and the whole weight of my body into that smash, aiming for the point of his chin; but he saw it coming and attempted to duck. My closed fist brought up with a crash on the top of his big bullet head; for he was slow and groggy and didn't duck low enough. However, it didn't hurt him, while the effect upon me was to break every small bone in my hand. It was like slugging a windlass bitt; for he leaned partly forward and hardly budged under the blow."

"I could not repress a slight grunt of pain, and I simply had to stop and rub my sore hand with the

other. He saw and heard; then he came for me, and the rest of the fight was the other way. I fought as I could, one-handed, for I couldn't even guard with my right; but it was no use. He soon had me going, and the last I remember of the fight was a sickening smash under the ear. I don't remember hitting the deck; but when I came to my senses I was laid out in the weather scuppers, and the skipper was down off the poop, talking to Mike."

SO, the skipper was saying, 'you are Red Macklin, are you? I've heard of you.' I also had heard of him; for Red Macklin's fame was international. He was a bullying, murderous scoundrel who had perhaps killed more sailors than any other first mate on the western ocean, and who, about five years previous, had foolishly shot his Captain. To kill a sailor is one thing; to shoot a skipper is another."

"Yes, sir," answered Mike respectfully. "I've just finished my time for that gunplay on Captain Blaine, and am not likely to repeat it. But my prospects were done for, and I had to ship fore the mast."

"You're a navigator, of course. Bring your dunnage into the first mate's room and take his place. Put his dunnage into the second mate's room, and make that duffer in the scuppers bundle his traps into the fore-castle. I want no weaklings aft with me."

"I scrambled to my feet at this; but—Well, there's no use detailing the argument that followed. I had to go forward peaceably or lose my prospects, like Red Macklin. And I had chosen the western ocean trade because of what I thought my fitness for it, and because in these short trips a man can the more quickly attract the notice of an owner. And I understood now why Macklin had run from me when he knew I had a gun; why he had licked his ship-mates; and the reason of his studied insolence to Mr. Parker and myself. He knew the ways of the packets, and, while avoiding guns and irons, he sought to attract the skipper's attention to his prowess. I thought it somewhat severe that Mr. Parker, who had put up no kind of fight, should be kept aft instead of me, until I reflected that Mr. Parker, with two whole fists, might still be good for any man on board except Macklin; while I, with only one, couldn't lick anybody. It was merely the survival of the fittest, and I was not fit."

"However, I drew comfort from the thought that when my hand got well I could win back my berth in the same manner, and to this end applied at once to the Captain for bandages and splints from the medicine chest. He responded like a brother; but earned none of my gratitude, for I considered the medicine chest as furnished out of the Marine Hospital dues, which I had paid for years."

"I had noticed that my pistol and Macklin's knife had disappeared from the watertank, and supposed that he, as the first act in his new position, had confiscated them. So, as I had no use for a gun while fore the mast, I put the matter from my mind. I meant to sing small—until my hand was well."

BUT what followed in that ship shows how little we can depend upon our good resolutions. I was still in the starboard watch, having taken Macklin's place forward, while he, as mate, had charge of the port watch, and Mr. Parker, as second, became my watch officer. So far there had been no friction between Mr. Parker and myself; but now I found the man dead down on me, as though he blamed me for his licking and his change of office.

"One-handed, I was almost useless around decks, and could not steer except in the finest of weather; but this made no difference. I was hounded, cursed, and struck, not only by Parker, but by the skipper and Macklin. Some kind of armed neutrality must have sprung up between Macklin and Parker with regard to me; but I could ascribe the skipper's new personal attitude only to a distrust of my philosophy, which, while impelling me to make the best of matters, may have seemed to him the calm before the storm. I escaped Macklin's abuse, however, except in the dog watches, when all hands were on deck."

"They damned, deviled, and degraded me, keeping me all night on lookout, and rousing me from sleep at any time of the day watch below to climb aloft and loose a royal, stop buntlines, or remove an Irish pennant—a loose rope yarn, you know—from any part of the rigging. My nerves went back on me from loss of sleep and futile anger and brooding, and once, when Macklin stripped off the sling I had rigged to hold my sore fist, and knocked me down for protesting, I saw red for a moment."

"Even so, nothing might have happened—had not the crew been included in the drill they were serving me. As an old hand in deep water ships, I knew the absolute necessity of preserving discipline, and that this can be done only by occasionally knocking down a malcontent; but no such considerations demanded the wholesale clubbing with heavers and handspikes that the men got from the trio. Belaying pins were not used—they were too small and light for the gentlemen. Macklin had four deadly enemies when he went aft, and soon every man forward had a grievance and voiced it in muttered profanity that held many a threat of death. I fancy that it was my presence in the fore-castle that inspired all this ill treatment; no doubt I was regarded as a bad example, whose influence over the men must be offset by stern, repressive measures, but whom they would not remove because of their dislike of the law. For the law could reach a skipper or mate, as Macklin well knew."

"And the crew? Never was a wild, half crazy herd of Liverpool Irishmen kept under control as that

crowd was by a bad example. While aft I had treated them well, and they liked me for my scrap with Macklin; so they listened while I counseled submission and avoidance of legal consequences—which last was the only point I made. They feared neither man, God, nor devil; but they did fear the law and grew quiet when I talked of jail and the gallows. And this fear possibly accounted for my finding my pistol—a newly invented Colt revolver—lying in my bunk one morning when I came in from a long night's lookout to get my breakfast."

"Who put this here?" I demanded. "Who had my gun?"

"No one would acknowledge the gift; but the state of mind behind it was given in the remark of one, 'Now ye've got it again, use it!'"

"I tucked it under my mattress, resolved not to use it; but a little later put it into my trousers pocket. Fear of the law, forward and aft, began to yield to fear of death. Men openly sharpened their knives, and the afterguard ostentatiously showed their pistols. Their pistols were not so good as mine; they were double barreled, muzzle loading derringers, with only two shots."

THINGS culminated on a moonlit night when we were charging along before a quartering whole sail breeze, making, I should judge, about eleven knots. I was on lookout, as usual, and keeping a good one, I know, even though my eyes would half close at times from sheer need of sleep. It was about seven bells of the first watch, and for some reason or other—perhaps the strong moonlight, which keeps some people awake—both the skipper and the first mate were on deck and standing aft near the wheel, while Mr. Parker stood his watch on the poop forward of the after house. The men walked up and down between the fore and main rigging."

"A faint light showed up ahead and to leeward. I opened my eyes wide to make sure and saw the faint shadowy outlines of hull and canvas, a ship close hauled across our bows. Then I sang out:

"Light ho! Ship on the port tack two points off the starboard bow, sir!"

"Light ho, is it?" bellowed the skipper. "Put another man on lookout and send that scow bunker aft here, Mr. Parker!"

"A man came and relieved me. Wondering what was up now, I went aft, and the skipper and two mates met me at the break of the poop."

"You get up there to the weather maintopsail yard arm, you blanked blind eyed farmer," snarled the skipper, "and keep your lookout there! D'ye hear? I saw that light ten minutes before you sang out."

"I reported it as soon as I saw it, sir," I answered civilly.

"None o' your lip! Get up there! And say—"

"I had answered and turned, in no way bothered by the change. I was to put in the rest of the night on the yard; but I could sit down and rest my bones."

"The skipper modified this. 'You keep your lookout there, and when the bell strikes you call out, 'All's well, weather maintopsail yard arm!'" Then you flap your arms like wings and crow like a rooster and you say, 'God bless Captain Black and Mr. Macklin and Mr. Parker!' D'you hear?"

"Yes, sir," I said, and went aloft, boiling over with humiliation and rage. Of what use was life, I thought, and success at sea, if it was to be bought at such a price in manhood and self respect? The more I thought of it the stronger grew my resolve to end it in some way."

IT was the man at the wheel who showed me the way. He was a hot-tempered Irishman, a good seaman; but an indifferent helmsman. He had put the ship off a couple of points at the skipper's order, so as to pass under the stern of the ship ahead, and had some trouble in steadying to the new course. He came in for a round of abuse from the three, and at last was relieved, while the skipper gave him instructions similar to mine. He was to take the lee maintopsail yard, call out the bells when struck on deck, and conclude with the cockcrow and blessing on his lords and masters. I heard his furious curses as he reached the yard and slid out to leeward."

"We passed under the stern of the other ship, and I judged by her rig that she was beating her way west, possibly to New York or Boston. As she dropped out of sight astern, eight bells struck on deck. The lookout on the fore-castle called out, 'Eight bells, t'gallant fo'cas'le! All's well!' in the peculiar singsong they have in that trade. I repeated my call from the weather yard arm; but I left out the crow and the prayer for blessings. The skipper and mates were looking up at me, and I saw that the first was about to sing out something; but Casey over to leeward interrupted."

"Eight bells!" he called. "Lee maintopsail yard arm. All's well, an' God send yer black hearts and cowardly souls to damnation, Captain Black, Mr. Macklin, an' Mr. Parker!"

"What's that—what?" stuttered the skipper. "Weather yard arm there, what do you say?"

"Go to —!" I answered furiously.

"The skipper was near his cabin window, and I saw him reach within. Casey, over to leeward, filled the night with his imprecations. He called down not blessings, but the tortures of the damned on his tormentors, and attracted the skipper's attention from me. When he stood up he held a short barreled rifle, and with this he took careful aim at Casey. Then there was a spat of flame, a report, a puff of smoke floating over the house, and Casey, an oath

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turned to go, beheld her luggage, and added, "Is there anyone to take up your things?"

She could not bear to have him enter her apartment in that awful prison costume. "Oh, yes," she answered. "You needn't be bothered with the bags."

"Very well. I will soon return." He departed at once, his impatience suddenly increased by the thought of seeking out McCoppet.

Beth watched him going. A sickening sense of revulsion invaded all her nature. And when her thoughts, like lawless rebels, stole guiltily to Van, she might almost have boxed her own tingling ears in sheer vexation.

She entered the house, summoned Elsa from her room, and had the luggage carried to their quarters. Then she opened her case, removed some dainty finery, and vaguely wondered if the horseman would like her in old lavender.

VAN, in the meantime, had been busy at the hay-yard known as Charlie's. Not only had Algy's arm been broken by the bully in the fight, but he had likewise been seriously mauled and beaten. His head had been cut; he was hurt internally. A doctor, immediately summoned by the horseman, had set the fractured member. Algy had then been put to bed in a tent that was pitched in the yard, where the horses, mules, cows, pyramids of merchandise, and teamsters were thicker than flies on molasses.

Gettysburg and Napoleon, quietly informed by Van of the latest turn of their fortune, were wholly unexcited by the news. The attack on Algy, however, had acted potently upon them. They started to get drunk, and achieved half a load before Van could herd them back to camp.

Napoleon was not only partially submerged when Van effected his capture; he was also shaved. Van looked him over critically.

"Nap," he said, "what does this mean, you wasting money on your face?"

Napoleon drunk became a stutterm who

whistled between his discharges of seltzer. "Wheresh that little g-g-g" (whistle) "girl," he answered. "—little D-d-d-d" (whistle) "Dutch one that looksh like—looksh like quoth the r-r-r-r" (whistle) "raven—never more!"

Van divined that this description was intended to indicate Elsa.

"Gone back to China," said he. "That shave of yours is wasted on the desert air."

Gettysburg, whose intellect was topheavy, had the singular habit, at a time like this, of removing his crockery eye and holding it firmly in his fist, to guard it from possible destruction. He stared uncertainly at both his companions. "China!" said he tragically. "China!"

"Hold on, now, Gett!" admonished Van, steering his tall companion as a man might steer a ladder. "You don't break out in the woman line again, or there's going to be some concentrated anarchy in camp."

"No, Van, no! Now, honest, no women!" said Gettysburg in a confidential murmur. "I had my woman eye took out the last time I went down to 'Frisco."

"You're a l-l-l-l" (whistle) "liar!" ejaculated Napoleon.

"What!" Gettysburg fairly shrieked.

"Metaphorical speakin'. Meta-f-f-f-f-f" (whistle) "phorical means you don't really m-m-m-m" (whistle) "mean what you say—means—quoth the r-r-r-r" (whistle) "raven—never more!"

Van said, "If you two old idiots don't do the lion and the lamb act pretty pronto, I'll send you both to the poorhouse."

They had entered the hay-yard, among the mules and horses. Gettysburg promptly reached down, laid hold of Napoleon, and kissed and kissed him violently on the nose.

Napoleon wept. "What did I s-s-s-s" (whistle) "say?" he sobbed lugubriously. "Sh, death, where is thy s-s-s-s" (whistle) "sting?"

Evening had come. The two fell asleep in Algy's tent, locked in each other's arms.

To be continued next Sunday.

## The Rock

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stopped on his lips, sprawled downward into the sea.

"The watch had been called, and appeared in time to see this. I heard the explosive but muttered comments, and then a concerted snarl of hatred and rage as they rushed aft. But I paid no present attention to it. I had drawn my pistol, and was taking careful aim with my left hand at the Captain, not so much determined by fear that I should be next as by a resolve, born of my emotions before the shooting, to bring things to an end.

THE skipper looked up at me and got the bullet, fairly in the face, I think; but I never was sure just where I hit him. He dropped, however, and lay still, while the two mates made a dive for the forward companion.

"Macklin got in; but not so Parker. The enraged men caught him just outside the door, slammed in his face by Macklin, and I had one glimpse of him as I scrambled in along the foot-ropes. He was in the center of a circle of flourishing sheath knives, his voice of command nearly silenced by the vengeful shouts and oaths of the men, and when I looked again, as I dropped into the rigging, he was prone on his back, while the men were surging aft to enter the cabin by the after companion. But Macklin was ahead of them, and had bolted it as he had the other.

"I descended and mounted to the poop.

"Ye'll have to take command, sir," said a big, red eyed fellow named Finnegan. 'Yer the shipped second mate, an' it b'langs to ye."

"Is the skipper dead?" I asked.

"Dead, as he ought to be, the murderer! Ye did well, sir."

"And Mr. Parker?" I glanced at the quiet, bleeding form at my feet.

"He's in small pieces, hild together be his bones."

"Not a pleasant prospect for me," I said; 'but I'm in for it, same as all of us. We'll have to stand trial; for there's no escape. But there's a rat down in his hole that we'll have to catch. Lookout, or he'll pot one of you through his window!"

"I spoke at random, yet none too soon. A pistol exploded in the mate's window, and a man went down, shot through the heart—the last one to join the rush over to starboard. But the rush continued to the capstan bar rack amidships, and, armed with these handy clubs, they came back to batter in the companion. Macklin did not fire again, and I was on the point of asking him out, to surrender on terms of amnesty and deposition, when a crashing, grinding jar shook the ship from bow to stern, and all three topgallant masts went out, heaving, snapping at the caps and falling forward. We had struck a rock in midocean.

THERE was no more thought of Macklin.

As we jumped to the main deck and ran forward like sheep, the jars and jolts were resumed, working aft, while the ship heeled far over to leeward. Chips was on deck, and I got him to sound the well. "Four feet, and coming in fast!" he called, and the men rushed for the boats on the forward house, while I went aft to the wheel. I had never heard of a rock in this part of the Atlantic, and thought for a moment that we might have hit a submerged derelict; but soon put that thought away; nothing but jagged rock could so tear into a ship's bottom.

"No steerage way, sir," said the man at the wheel. "She's fallen off due south."

"Drop your wheel," I said, "and lend a hand with the boats."

"I waited a few moments before following

him, looking around at the prospect. Since I had gone aloft the wind had hauled to the north and died down to a gentle breeze, which barely ruffled the very slight ground swell. It was not the pressure of this wind that had driven the ship over the rock until she hung, pivoted, at a point near the stern; it was the ship's momentum. The wind, however, had swung her head to the south, and it was bringing down on us a cold, damp fog out of the north, which already had shut out the moon and rendered indistinct the forms of the men at work on the boats. I could see, however, that the bow had settled nearly under, and knew that it was only a question of moments when the ship would slide head first down the declivity. I ran forward, and just as I started a report rang out from the after companion and a bullet furrowed my hair. I had forgotten Macklin; but had moved just in time.

"Furious with anger and hatred, I halted in the alley and reached for my revolver; but it was gone from my pocket—jolted out, perhaps, as we jumped off the poop. So I left Macklin to his own problem and joined the men.

"There were two whaleboats, which we had carried upside down on the forward house, and when I got there I found that the men, sailors all from head to foot, had turned them over fitted in the bottom plugs, and bent long painters that led forward outside the rigging. There was no time to rig hoisting tackles aloft, nor was there need, as a gang to each could launch them bodily over, one on either side.

"Sailors all, from head to feet, but wild 'packet rats' whose necks were already in their halters! I considered my chance in an open boat with that crowd, and thought of my gun, lying somewhere aft on the main deck. Resolved to risk another shot from Macklin rather than my chance unarmed among the men, I turned back, watching the cabin windows with one eye, and searching the deck with the other; but I saw no gun, and perhaps Macklin did not see me, for there was no more shooting.

"Giving it up at last, I ran forward as both boats went over the side and the men were tumbling into them. As I ran I noticed the steeper incline to the deck, and that the forecabin was submerged; but I was not prepared for the sudden launch of the ship into the sea, nor the sickening crash of riven timbers as her after-body was torn away, which drowned my shouts to the men.

IN a roaring, yeasty froth of tumultuous water, I went under, and when I at last came to the surface, half drowned, I was alone on the sea, hidden from the boats by the thick envelop of fog. I shouted, and was answered faintly; but not able to determine the direction the sound came from, I could only shout again and tread water, hoping to make sure.

"But I could not make sure; sound is twisted around amazingly in fog, and little by little the calls grew fainter. I was tired out already, and my useless right arm ached with the hard usage it had lately received. In the next few minutes, while my chin sank lower and lower in the water, I thought of about every incident of my life; but just as the first mouthful went down my throat my right foot hit something, and the next moment I was standing on it, a hard, firm substance which could be nothing but the rock.

"At first I found difficulty in holding my footing, until I realized that I must breast a current of about half a knot; but when I had mastered the knack I found no trouble. Feeling carefully with my feet, I explored the ground underfoot, and following a rise to where

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under water again; but this time I met him with a kick that sent him so far down as to give me hope he would stay there; but he didn't. He came up, swam around to the south, came down with the current, all arms and legs, and brushed me off. I did the same; but he met me with his feet, and I drifted by. However, I had him by the leg with my one good hand, and he came with me. We swam side by side; but he beat me, and scrambled to his feet on the small spur of rock that meant life to one of us, but not to both. I swam weakly round to the south, and then down on him, realizing that my strength was giving out. But the fight went on, and I soon realized that his gun was soaked, or left behind; otherwise he would have used it before this.

I HAVE often wondered if God and the angels watched that fight in mid-ocean, or only hell and the devils. The nearest land to the west must have been Cape Race, the nearest to the east the Azores, each about five hundred miles away. I did not know the longitude; but I did know that we had sailed due east since I was disrated, and that then we were on the forty-seventh parallel.

"And so, in latitude forty-seven north, longitude unknown, two weakened human brutes unable to strike a heavy and telling blow, yet animated by a fear of death and love of life that twisted their features into frenzied contortions (I judged mine by Macklin's), struggled feebly for the possession of a mountaintop rising from the seabed, on the diminishing chance that some ship would come to the rescue before hunger, thirst, or a rising sea overcame them.

"I hardly know how it ended; I only knew that I found myself too weak to breast the current, and then I gave up, and drifted. I went under twice, I remember, and waited calmly for the end; but before the last sinking I heard voices; then I was clutched by the hair, and as I was dragged bodily into a boat I lost my senses. When I came to, the men lifted me up, and I saw big Finnegan at the tiller, standing erect and declaiming to something astern:

"Stay there an' think it over, ye man-killin' shlawe driver! Stay there, ye devil out o' hades, an' may the min ye've killed come back to

keape ye company till yer master comes fur ye!" "I took one look at Macklin. He was standing erect, breasting the current with his arms folded, secure in the possession of the foothold he had won from me. But he sent no call for help, and soon went out of sight in the thinning fog as the boat sailed away.

"There is little more to this yarn. We never saw the other boat again, and did not know the story they told if rescued. But among ourselves we agreed to say nothing about the mutiny or the shooting or the rock—only that we had struck something submerged, that the ship had sunk, and that the Captain, first mate, and three sailors had been drowned. We were picked up in a few days, told this lie, and were not questioned closely. Then I realized why the men had stood by me; they wanted a shipped officer to justify the story.

"But I knew the long arm of the law, and I did not know the fate of the other boat, or the tale they might tell; so I shipped for the East, found and learned this strait, and have been here since, afraid to go home."

THIS is the yarn I listened to on anchor watch thirty years ago. It pertains to events forty years farther back in the past. If that white haired, mild mannered old pilot is still alive, he is over ninety-five years old and immune from earthly punishment.

But, before deciding to give this story to the world, I visited the United States Hydrographic Office for some corroborative data, and on a pilot chart of 1896 read that one Captain Lloyd, of the British ship Crompton, had lately reported seeing in latitude forty-seven north and longitude thirty-seven degrees twenty minutes west, a rock sixty feet long and eight or ten feet high in the middle. It was at a time of low spring tides, and such a menace to navigation could easily elude observation under ordinary conditions. Captain Lloyd averred that he saw it at twenty minutes to eight on a fine, sunshiny morning, so close and clear to him that he forbore lowering a boat.

Yet, as I learned from further inquiry, he was the subject of much ridicule, and his story was generally disbelieved.

Should it be disbelieved?

## CADET AND MIDDY PATTERN

By Major B. W. Atkinson

IT is not surprising that visitors to the Military Academy at West Point and the Naval Academy at Annapolis have some difficulty in understanding many of the expressions used by these embryo Generals and Admirals; for the cadets at these two schools make use of so much local patter that at times one feels the need of an interpreter to make the sense clear.

The slang of necessity changes from year to year; but many of the expressions are as old as the hills, and were used by many a cadet or middy who later in life wrote his name in the history of our country, who if he lives to-day, an old retired General or Admiral, will use the same old slang phrases he used when a cadet when he revisits his alma mater. Naturally, few of these expressions are common at the two academies; so a visitor at one place, who thinks after a visit that he is quite proficient in the slang used there, will find himself quite at sea at the other.

Some expressions have entirely opposite meanings at the two schools. A civilian is known as a "cit" and a man before passing his entrance examinations is called a "candidate." Girl visitors, who delight the hearts of the cadets by their calls, are termed "fems"; and when a cadet has an engagement to escort one of the gentle sex anywhere he "drags" her. A fourth classman is a "plebe," and the foot man of a class the "goat"; but when he falls still lower or out of the class by being found deficient on an examination, but is turned back to go over the course again in the next lower class, then he becomes a "turn-back." The officer of the day is called the "O. D." and the officer in charge the "O. C.," and as both are on the lookout to report cadets for violations of regulations they are equally loved (officially) at both academies. A new man from the same congressional district who takes the place of one to graduate is his "pred," and the stupid, awkward man is "wooden," either at West Point or Annapolis.

### Some of the Differences

THESE are about all of the expressions common to both schools. A military cadet who has failed to pass his examinations is "found"; while his brother at the naval academy is "bilged," a term that smacks of the sea, for a vessel bilged is pretty worthless to the navy. A naval cadet when he studies hard "gouges"; but a "gouger" transferred to West Point would become "bonoid," because to study there is to "bone." The natty cadet on the Hudson who talks "idle nothings" into the ear of the sweet girl visitor is a "spooner"; while he who lives on the Severn is a "fusser." It would be hard to tell which cadet can "spoon" or "fuss" the harder or pour into the ear of the willing "fem" more words of undying devotion and slavery. In this game the two corps will probably always play "tie game," and not see-saw as they do from year to year in the game where only men engage, football.

The gray coated cadet "rags" when he makes a good recitation; but the cadet in blue makes a "bat"; and conversely a "fess" and a "bust."

To curry favor with the powers that be at the military academy is to "bootlick"; while he who does likewise at Annapolis "greases."

A midddy who goes beyond certain limits without leave "frenches"; the army cadet "runs it." What is called Irish stew in civil

life becomes "hash" at the sailors' school and "slum" at the soldiers'.

An Annapolis cadet gets "D's" for violations of regulations; but the West Pointer gets "skinned." Each will tell you his is the worse, and he who is caught in the act is "hived" at West Point and "ragged" at Annapolis. The latter term at the Military Academy means to make a fine showing, i.e., "ragged out on examination." A joke is a joke to the midddy; but it is a "grind" to the would-be second lieutenant.

A term that sounds as if it should belong to the naval slang is found in the army list; that is "poop deck." The office of the "O. C." overlooks the area of barracks where many formations of the corps take place. Opening out from this office is a small balcony. When the formations are to take place, the "O. C." takes station on this "poop deck" to report any violations of regulations he may see committed. Consequently, the "poop deck" is not looked upon with favored eyes by the corps.

The army cadet who attends Y. M. C. A. meetings is termed a "hell dodger."

### A Puzzled Father

THE following, taken from a delightful story for boys and dealing with life at West Point, is a fair illustration of the possibilities of the West Pointer in the use of slang. A cadet in his first year writes to his father, who replies:

"Will you kindly translate the inclosed remarks from your last letter home? As nobody here is conversant with the dead language evidently taught at the Military Academy, we are unable to ascertain what you are talking about. For example, at the bottom of the second page you say, 'I fessed cold in Math last week; but maxed it clean in English.' Then farther on you lapse into the unknown tongue with the following, 'I'm sure you'll be glad to know that I rag regardless at drill now, and might bone chevrons for yearling camp if I hadn't been hived by the tac of our div Saturday night, running it after traps; which of course put me on the area for extras, and I must bone demerits to keep from being found. But even if I succeed in getting chevrons, I'd probably be busted at the first formation; so I'll try to content myself with the rear rank and let some other fellow do the bracing.'"

Put into plain everyday talk this would mean in substance:

"I made a complete failure in mathematics last week, but made a perfect mark in English; and am sure you will be glad to know that I am doing finely in my drills now and might try to work up and get the chevrons of a noncommissioned officer during my third year's class camp; but I was caught going out of barracks after hours by the officer in charge of my division, and this gave me the punishment of having to walk extra tours of guard duty on the area of barracks. So I must be careful and not get too many demerits, or I should be dropped for getting over the allowance in a year. If I succeeded in getting the chevrons, I should probably be reduced again the first time there was any formation of the corps; so I will not try, but let some other fellow make the effort by having a military bearing."

Many of these expressions of their academy days are carried away by the graduates, and it is not uncommon to hear old officers of both branches of the service making use of patter in their daily life aboard ship and in garrison.